



Designing Impactful Learning Experiences

Social and emotional learning can take place when youth are engaged in activities that allow them to practice and develop various skills that show up across the Ways of Being model.

Use this section of the toolkit to incorporate activities in your program that focus on developing all four of the Ways of Being. These activities allow youth to explore their individual and community identity (Ways I Am), practice sharing gratitude and communicate one's feelings (Ways of Feeling), learn about empathy and set group norms (Ways of Relating), and develop clear goals and work towards consensus (Ways of Doing).

Meet the Wobbies

Wobbies are case narratives of individual youth who are navigating through one or more parts of the Ways of Being (WOB) model. The stories of these seven characters can be used to spark conversation among youth about the social and emotional skills at play in the stories and in their own SEL development. The Wobbies were created in partnership with a team of diverse young people as part of the Youth Voice Project on Youth Ways of Being (YWOB).

Why This Matters

- The Wobbie stories provide a way for youth to begin to think and talk about the social and emotional skills of other youth as well as themselves.
- Discussing the life experiences of other people allows youth to practice social and emotional skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and understanding others' feelings.

Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of Wobbie story for each youth.
- Time: Devote at least 15 minutes to each Wobbie.
- Pick 2 to 3 stories that youth in your program might relate to.
- Before this activity, consider introducing the [Ways of Being model](#) so youth and staff have a common language for talking about SEL.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain to the group of youth that you will be reading stories about other youth and then discussing their experiences.
- 2) Read the story individually or read aloud as a group.
- 3) After reading a story, use the discussion questions below each story to spark a conversation.

Take It Further

- After reading the Wobbie stories, discuss with youth which Wobbie they most related to and why.
- Consider having youth create a Wobbie of themselves at this point in their lives. Have youth think about which of their SEL areas are strongest and which could be improved.
- Youth could create a play or write a story about the Wobbie of their choosing.

Meet the Wobblers

NIKKI

Nikki used to be one of those students. You know the kind: the ones who get good grades, participate in clubs and volunteer activities, and tutor younger kids after school. In middle school, Nikki was the captain of the dance team, helped organize trips for the environmental awareness club and got A's in her classes. She looked forward to high school, where they did real experiments in real science labs, where she could publish stories in the school magazine, and where the dance team would actually perform during halftime at games. But freshman year was tough. Nikki struggled in geometry class, but she was embarrassed to ask for help because she used to be one of the "smart" kids. The school magazine rejected the first story she submitted for the fall issue. Every time she got up to do a presentation in any class, she would freeze and forget everything she'd planned to say. Nikki's grades started falling. By the end of the year she had dropped out of dance team, had given up on the literary magazine and was failing math. She knew she needed to get some help with schoolwork, but wasn't sure how to. She was so far behind anyway, what was the point? School used to be so easy, but maybe she just wasn't good at it anymore, so why should she even try to do well at anything?



Discussion Questions

- What are some of the feelings that Nikki is having right now?
- Why does she feel this way?
- What advice do you have for her?
- Think about a time where you tried to do something hard. What was it? What did you do to accomplish this? How did you feel about the outcome of what you did?
- When is it important to stick with hard things? When is it okay to let those things go?
- What long-term goals do you have? What short-term goals do you have? How could you go about accomplishing these goals?

Meet the Wobbies

DREW

Drew is almost finished with a beat he's been working on for a week. He has half an hour of studio time left and he thinks he'll get it done today. When Eddie texts: "come smoke with us," Drew isn't sure what to do. If he leaves to smoke, he'll lose his last 30 minutes of studio time and won't be able to work on his music until next week. Drew doesn't even like to smoke. But if he doesn't go hang out with Eddie, he and Eddie might not be cool anymore. It's important to be cool with Eddie because Eddie knows everybody and nobody messes with him—or his friends. Drew's parents have always told him to stay away from guys like Eddie, but Drew doesn't think it's that simple. "Guys like Eddie" are everywhere. Maybe not at school, and maybe not in the teen center where the music studio is, but Drew isn't always at school, and he isn't always at the teen center. He has to navigate the outside world where there are all kinds of people, and he has to figure out how to get along with them. Eddie doesn't have the greatest reputation—he's been banned from the teen center and a lot of adults think he's a juvenile delinquent. Drew's worried not only about getting caught smoking, he's also worried that people might think he's just like Eddie.



Discussion Questions

- What are some of the choices Drew has to make in this scenario?
- What are the pros and cons of those choices?
- What would you do if you were Drew, both right now and going forward, with respect to Eddie?
- How are you similar to Drew? How are you different?
- In what situations might your personal goals be more important or less important than relationships you have with people?
- Think about two relationships from different parts of your life: they could be friendships, relationships with family members, teachers, coaches, people from your religious group, classmates. How do you act with each of these people when you're with them? Do you talk and act the same way around each group? Why or why not?

Meet the Wobbies

CHRIS

Chris has lots of friends. People like him because they say he is friendly and positive. He's good at cheering other people up, and at "looking on the bright side." He gets good grades at school, and adults think he's "mature" and "responsible." Chris has a good reputation with his friends and with adults in the community, and he knows he should feel lucky. But sometimes, Chris' life feels like an act. Sometimes he's sad. Sometimes he's mad. Sometimes he's confused, and isn't sure what he should do in certain situations. Chris likes his friends, but sometimes he feels like he doesn't fit in with them. He doesn't know how to tell them that's he's feeling bummed out or confused, because he's Chris, the Good Guy. He feels like the only time he can really say what's he's feeling is when he's in front of the mic, performing.



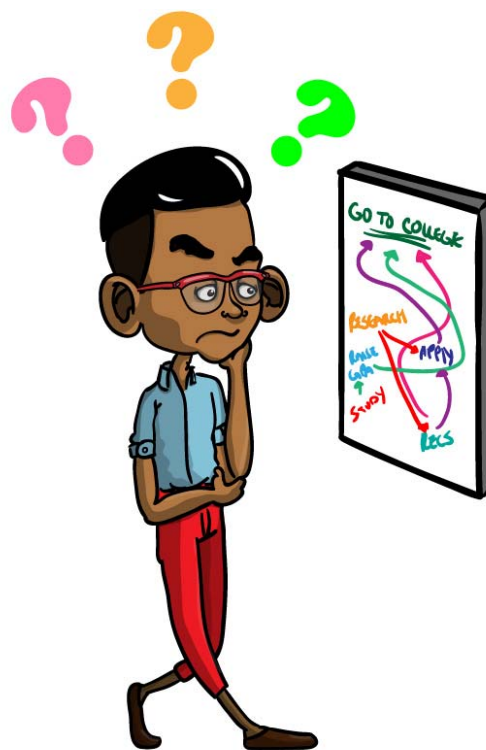
Discussion Questions

- If Chris was one of your friends, how would you support him?
- What advice would you give to Chris?
- Have you ever felt like Chris before? How did you handle the situation?
- How are you similar to Chris? How are you different?
- In what situations do you feel most comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings? In what situations is it hard to express yourself?
- Which feelings are easy for you to express? Which feelings are hard for you to express? Why do you think certain feelings are easier or harder to share with others?

Meet the Wobbies

TONY

Tony is going to do it. He's going to be the first person in his family to go to college. His whole life, his parents and teachers have told him that he could go to college if he just worked hard enough. And Tony has worked hard. He has always gotten straight A's at school. He plays trumpet and is the section leader in band. He volunteers in the church daycare on Sundays during church services. He works as a cashier at a grocery store three nights a week, and his manager keeps telling him to apply for the assistant manager job because he's so good at calming mad customers down. Everyone tells Tony he is doing everything right, but he is worried that he isn't doing enough. The truth is, Tony doesn't know what exactly he should be doing, or when. He works hard, but he isn't sure what he should be working hard at. Tony will be a senior in the fall, and some of his friends are talking about visiting colleges and looking for scholarships, but Tony has no idea how to do any of this. Tony wants to go to college, but he knows his family can't afford it. He isn't sure how to research which colleges he should apply to because he doesn't know what he wants to study. Tony is worried that if he does one thing wrong, it will ruin his chances for getting into school, but he just doesn't know how to navigate all the steps and tasks.



Discussion Questions

- How do you think Tony is feeling?
- Have you ever felt like Tony before? How did you handle the situation?
- What pressures do you feel in your own life?
- What strategies do you use to plan for the future?
- What goals do you have for the future?
- What kind of support does Tony need? Who do you go to for support in your own life?

Meet the Wobbies

AMIRA

Amira has 1000 followers on Instagram. Every picture she posts gets “liked” right away by tons of people she doesn’t even know. Amira thinks a lot about the pictures she posts, especially the selfies. She’s careful to choose the pictures that show the best parts of her life. In her pictures, Amira always looks perfect, is doing something fun, and is with cool people. She always has something funny to say about her pictures. Lately, Amira has been wondering what people think about her based on the pictures she posts. She wonders what they would think if they saw her real life, because it’s nothing like the life she represents online. In her real life she gets in fights with her best friend. She takes care of her grandma, who sometimes needs help because she’s old and sick. She’s really good at math, and likes to watch stupid cartoons on TV. She feels like her real life is pretty normal and ordinary. Amira wonders, if she posted things about her real life, would people follow her? Would people still like her? And would it even matter, since she doesn’t know who many of them are?



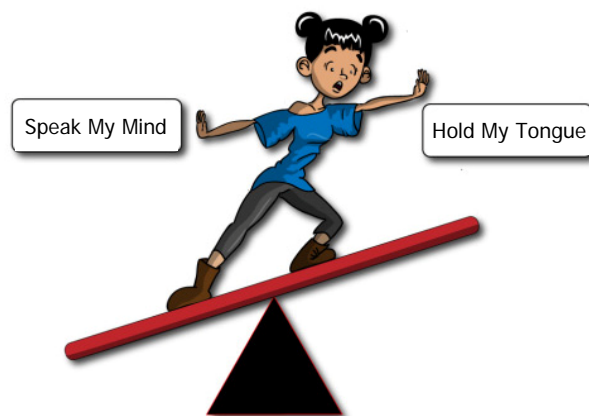
Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to Amira? How are you different?
- What parts of your life do you share on social media? What parts do you not share?
- Do you think Amira should share more about her “real life”? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits of using social media in your own life?
- Which parts of your identity are you the most open about with others?
- What parts of your identity are harder to share with others? Why do you think that is?

Meet the Wobblers

MAI

Mai transferred to a school on the other side of town at the beginning of the school year. Her new school has classes in graphic design and an exchange program that lets students spend a semester in Japan—two things she's wanted to do for a long time, but that weren't available at her old school. Her friends from her old school tease her by saying that she goes to a 'fancy school' now with the 'fancy kids.' Many of Mai's new classmates live in really nice houses and go on vacations to places she's only dreamed of visiting. Mai was a little worried that she wouldn't fit in, but she's enjoyed making new friends, and some of them just invited her to join the school's newspaper staff. She feels good about being able to do things that she likes to do, and feels like she has a lot in common with her new classmates, even though they live on opposite sides of town. Last week, she went to a basketball game where her new school played against her old school. After the game, Mai went out with some of her new friends. They talked a little about how the game went (her new school won). Then her friends started making fun of the kids at her old school. Mai felt uncomfortable, like she should stand up for her old school, but is worried that it will make them dislike her. It's just like when her friends from her old school call her new classmates snobs. But she doesn't know what to say. She loves all of her friends, and wants to get along with all of them, but she thinks what they're saying is wrong. She doesn't know whether she should speak up or hold her tongue.



Discussion Questions

- What are some ways Mai could handle the situation? What would you decide to do?
- Mai is deciding between her “speaking her mind” and “holding her tongue”. Have you been in a similar situation before? What did you do?
- Have you ever had to change schools? What was your experience like? What strategies did you use to make new friends?
- Think about the last time you had conflict with your friends. How did you handle it?
- How are you similar to Mai? How are you different?
- If you were in Mai's situation, what social and emotional skills would you use to move forward?

Meet the Wobblers

JAMES

James has to get to work on time because he wants to take Alexis to the prom. James has got prom night all planned out—a tux, a limo, dinner, flowers. Alexis is going to be so impressed. But those things aren't cheap, so first, James has to get to work at the pizza place on time. When he got hired at the pizza place, his boss made a big deal about how they never hire teens because teens are so irresponsible, like they couldn't trust him to do this important job of putting pepperonis on pies. It's not like life or death. But James also knows most of his friends are having a hard time finding jobs, and it would be stupid to lose the job he already has. He's already been late for work once, and the boss gave him this long lecture about it. James was annoyed—he's always the best worker on his shift—but he knows that the pepperonis are just part of his plan. Pizza is his ticket to the prom.



Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to James? How are you different?
- What responsibilities do you juggle in your own life?
- James is motivated to work so he is able to go to prom. What are some of your goals that motivate you? Pick one goal. What steps are you taking to achieve it?
- How do you manage your time? What gets in the way of getting everything done?
- What strategies do you use when you have a lot to get done?
- Think of a situation in your life when you felt misunderstood by adults. How did it make you feel? How did you handle it?

Identity Wheel

Use this activity with youth to think critically about how they see themselves and how they believe the world sees them. By examining their own identity, youth think about the **Ways I Am**.

This activity was adapted from the *Urban Youth Movement: Imagining Futures In and Through Higher Education* curriculum.

Why This Matters

- Identity shapes the expression of social and emotional skills and informs how one defines which skills are most important.
- Youth practice self-awareness and reflection to think about their own identity.

Getting Started

- Materials: Blank sheet of paper with a large circle in the middle, extra paper, whiteboard or large sheet of paper, Markers/colored pencils
- Time: 45 minutes- depending on group size
- Draw your own identity wheel ahead of time so that you can share it with youth as an example.
- We use the terms “identities” and “components of your identity” interchangeably.

How To Use It

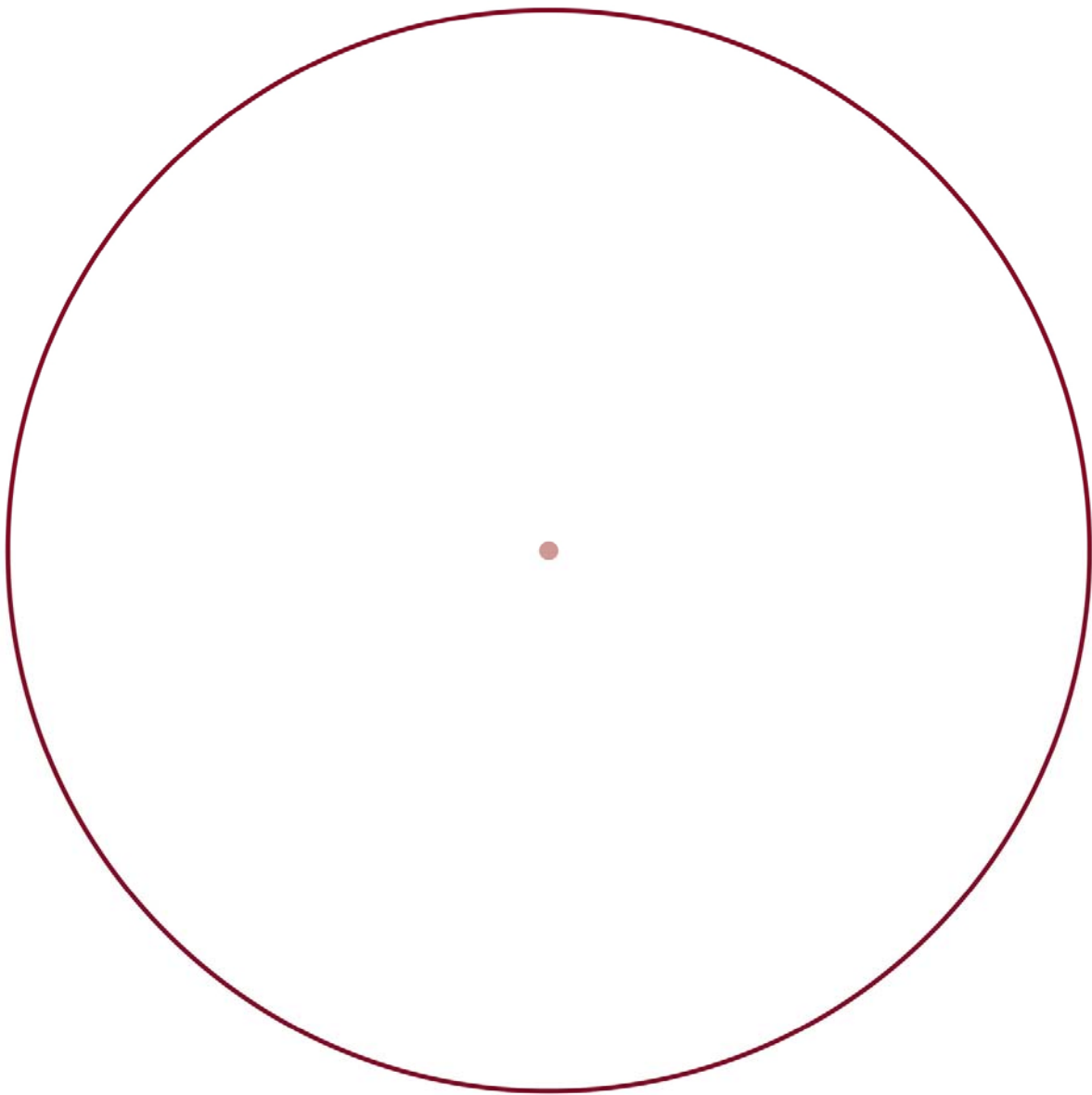
- 1) Begin by telling youth that we will be talking about our identities. Ask youth what an identity is. Continue to explain that an identity is what makes a person who she or he is. It also relates to how a person sees herself or himself relative to the world and how the person understands her or his possibilities for the future.

- 2) Ask youth to come up with examples of what might be elements of one's identity. Write this list on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper. Explain we will make a wheel to describe the most important components of our identity. You can bring an example of your own identity wheel to share with youth.
- 3) Ask youth to write down all of the components of their identity on a separate sheet of paper (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, education level, abilities, etc.).
- 4) Using a blank circle, ask them to divide their wheel into sections that show the parts of their identity, with the size of each section relating to how aware they are of each identity on a daily basis. For example, a person might not think too much about being male or female, but might be very aware of their race and think about it a lot. [Tip: It is helpful sometimes for youth to rank their identities in order of importance.]
- 5) Once everyone has completed this activity, have youth share their circle and then answer these question in small groups or the large group:
 - Tell us why you see yourself this way.
 - Which parts of your identity were you most aware of? Why do you think that is?
 - Do any of these identities help you achieve your goals or aspirations?
 - Do any of them make it hard for you to achieve your goals or aspirations?
 - How much control do you have over your identity? Are there certain parts of your identity over which you feel you have more or less control? Why do you think that is?

Take It Further

- Do this activity at the beginning and end of a program cycle. Have youth compare the two identity wheels and discuss why the wheel might have changed.

Template: Identity Wheel



Parts of My Identity:

Mask Making

Use this activity to help youth actively engage in expressing their identity as a dimension of their **Ways I Am**. This is an art activity involving decorating the inside and outside of masks with guided instructions. The goal is to have participants do a self-assessment of who they are and how they show up to others. This activity was contributed by the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program in the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Why This Matters

- This activity facilitates self-awareness as youth think deeply about how they express themselves.
- Youth will practice active listening and understanding of another youth.

Getting Started

- Materials: Masks (can be purchased in bulk from art store), Paints, paint brushes, markers, magazine and newspaper, hot glue gun, beads, ribbons, flip chart paper, Mod Podge
- Total time: 2-3 hours
- Activity will need to be done in two sessions to allow paint to dry. Partners cannot be in the same room at the same time – it should be a surprise.
- Either set up two art rooms or plan a separate activity for one set of youth to do while their partners are making their masks.
- Consider in advance how you will help youth structure their partner interviews so that the time is meaningful.

How to Do It

- 1) Assign each youth a partner and give them each a mask.
- 2) Have the youth interview their partner. Tell youth to talk about their interests, strengths, passions, talents, qualities, what's important to them. Remind youth to practice active listening since they will be making a mask that shows who their partner is and what matters to them.
- 3) Based on what they have heard, one partner should decorate the outside of their partner's mask. Emphasize to the youth that there is no right or wrong answer and they should do the best they can based on the information heard. Partners should have space to decorate the masks away from each other. If there is not enough space to accommodate this, plan a separate activity that can be completed by the non-mask making partner.
 - a. Direct participants to paint the outside of the mask
 - b. Caution against too much paint saturation because the masks have to dry while the cutting of magazines is being done.
 - c. Use other decorative materials to decorate the outside of the mask.
- 4) When everyone is done, have youth switch masks with their partner. Remind youth that they should not discuss their masks with their partner at this point. They will be discussing the masks after they have painted the inside.
- 5) Youth should then finish their own mask on the inside. They should have space away from their partner and others so they can work independently.
 - a. Have youth decorate the inside of the mask and think about the following questions: Who are you on the inside? What don't people easily see about you? What are parts of your personality or person you don't show often?
 - b. Cover with Mod Podge to make it shiny.

Mask Making

- 6) Bring the full group together to share masks. Youth should explain their mask, how someone perceived them, and how that is similar or different from who they really are.
- 7) Have partners pair up and share with each other why they painted the mask the way they did.
- 8) Debrief experience with guided questions. Some potential questions are:
 - What did you learn about how you reveal yourself to others?
 - If your inside self and outside self are not aligned, why not? What happens when there is a misalignment? How do you feel about this?
 - What holds us back from fully being our true self out in the world?
 - What would it take in order to align or integrate our inside with our outside selves?
 - Why might this be important to how others see and interact with us?
 - How might doing this or not doing this impact how we lead?

Take It Further

- Bring this mask back at the end of the year for another art project to see how much you have grown over the year. Now, individuals can paint who they want to be or express themselves externally. This would be about claiming your own authenticity, growth in self-knowledge, and how they want to relate to others.
- This activity could also be done with adults as part of a staff training or staff development.

Community Asset Mapping

Use this activity to help youth deepen their understanding of how their community informs their identity. Youth will participate in a structured walk to brainstorm assets and needs within their neighborhood. Rather than focus on Ways I Am this activity explores the **Ways We Are** as a community. This activity was contributed by Banyan Community and adapted from a National Youth Leadership Council curriculum.

Why This Matters

- This activity allows youth to practice awareness of their physical surroundings and the community strengths that they benefit from.

Getting Started

- Materials: pen and paper for each youth, clipboards for every two youth, route information, map of the neighborhood, large paper for group discussion.
- Time: At least 45 minutes to an hour for the entire activity
- Divide youth into groups of 3-4. There should be an adult for every group.
- A few days before the activity, try out your planned route. Make note of how long it takes to walk the route, safety hazards, and observations of your own take on the assets you observe.

How To Do It

- 1) As a large group, brainstorm the meaning of "community." Potential discussion questions: "Is your school a community?" "How big does a community need to be?" "What should we consider our community for the purpose of doing some work to help improve it?"
- 2) Agree upon what the group will identify as their community or neighborhood (e.g., school campus, the school campus and five-block radius, X, Y, and Z streets).
- 3) Assign one adult per group, and assign different starting points for each group. Decide on an ending time for the activity and a meeting place. Plan for at least 30 minutes for the walk.
- 4) Walking in groups of three pairs within each group, conduct a tour of the selected area and identify key places, organizations, and institutions in the community.

Questions to consider:

- Where do people congregate?
- What are our most important businesses in the area?
- What recreation facilities, schools, associations, congregations, and other neighborhood institutions exist?
- Consider also social assets such as different cultures, ethnicities, and age groups.

These will be identified as **community assets**: the good things a community has to offer.

- 5) As the groups walk, have participants observe and write what they consider to be needs or problems in the community. Are there safe, productive, and fun places for children to spend time after school? Do they sense tensions among neighbors? What problems or issues do they find in the neighborhood? These will be identified as **community needs**: what the community is lacking.

Community Asset Mapping

- 6) Reconvene all the groups to share what the youth observed, both assets and needs. Use a large piece of paper, blackboard or whiteboard to record participants' observations under the two columns: Assets and Needs.
- 7) Reflect and discuss as a group. Ask the group what the common themes are among the participants' observations. Broaden the discussion by asking the group what items they would add to the lists, i.e. other assets and needs that the youth are aware of but may not have observed directly during their walk.

Take It Further

- Consider having youth journal individually after the activity. Some potential prompts are:
 - Describe something that you noticed during your observation walk that you hadn't in the past.
 - How did it feel to look at a familiar area through "different eyes" in order to record assets and needs?
 - What would you like your neighborhood to look like in five years? What assets can you imagine it having? How can you help it develop these assets?
- This activity could be used to spark ideas about a potential service learning project.

Gratitude Candle

Use this activity to create a space for participants to practice expressing gratitude. The exercise allows youth to explore their **Ways of Feeling** as they share their emotions about another person. The Candle Activity was contributed by the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program in the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Why This Matters

- Being able to express gratitude is an important part of being a leader.
- Expressing gratitude allows youth to practice their emotional awareness and communication skills.

Getting Started

- Materials: Two chairs facing each other with a lit candle in the middle, tissue boxes.
- Time: A minimum of 30 minutes but it depends on how many youth are present.
- Have everyone sit in a circle as they enter the room. Consider having the room be slightly dark so the candle stands out.
- Have a youth leader (or adult if a youth leader is not available) model the process first.
- This activity works best with groups who already know each other.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain to youth that this is a challenge by choice activity, so this means that they can choose to go in the middle or not. If they decide not to go, it is ok - their role is to listen, witness, and hold the space for others who take a turn in the middle.
- 2) Explain that throughout the world, people light candles for many purposes: to illuminate darkness, dedicate prayers, affirm intentions, offer blessings, and express gratitude. Explain to participants that the purpose of the activity is to express gratitude to others.
- 3) Ask youth to think about the following questions: Who are they grateful for in their life? How has that person helped or supported them? If they want to come up, one at a time, they should sit in either chair and talk to the imaginary person whom they want to talk to.
- 4) There is no clapping after people go. Just silently observe. Be sure to remind youth about working agreements or expectations: be respectful, treat others like how they want to be treated, and what is said here stays here.
- 5) Depending on the size of the group, set expectations for how many times participants will be allowed to go. Adult or youth leaders can begin the activity as a model.
- 6) Let participants know when the activity is almost finished. After the last participant, thank everyone who went and those who didn't but stayed present and witnessed the gratitude people shared. Encourage participants that this activity could be the beginning of a gratitude practice in their everyday life.

Gratitude Candle

Take It Further

- This activity could be used consistently with a group as a way to encourage each other and provide positive feedback.
- Possible reflection questions:
 - How did you feel before in comparison to after going up?
 - How did it feel to listen to others express gratitude?
 - Why is gratitude important?
 - How did it feel to express gratitude toward others?
 - Who are other people in your life that you would like to express gratitude to? How might you go about doing this?

Complaint/Feeling/Request

Use the Complaint/Feeling/Request (CFR) process as a communication tool to address issues/conflict through a one-on-one conversation. Introduce CFR when you sense that students need to give one another simple feedback. The process helps individuals bring up challenges and address concerns before they fester. CFR allows youth to explore their **Ways of Feeling** because it allows them to safely express their emotions about a situation. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

Why This Matters

- Conflict is a healthy part of the group formation process.
- Teaching a conflict resolution process provides youth with the skills to resolve and learn from conflict.

Getting Started

- Initially, CFR is taught as a group activity (see How To Do It). Once the group is familiar with the process, it is most useful as an ongoing peer-to-peer conflict resolution tool (see Taking It Further).
- Print off and consider laminating the CFR At-a-Glance so youth have an accessible reminder of the CFR steps.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain that the group is going to practice a process for resolving conflict. Split up the group into pairs.
- 2) Have each pair establish who is giving and who is receiving the feedback.
- 3) Assign each pair a practice scenario. Feel free to come up with your own ideas for scenarios. Some potential scenarios are:
 - During a teambuilding game, Ben begins making negative comments about the activity ("We're never going to finish. This is stupid!") and Sarah starts to feel frustrated by Ben's attitude.
 - A couple days into a week-long camping trip, Grace has started to avoid doing dishes. Leah, her fellow camper, has noticed and feels angry about the situation.
 - During their after-school arts program, Gabe constantly interrupts other students in the program while they share their artwork to the group. Gabe's friend, Peter, notices what is happening and wants to talk to him about it.
- 4) Explain the steps of CFR:
 - **Complaint:** the person who is giving the feedback simply states their complaint or problem to a specific person (or the group as a whole); ex: "Jesse, my complaint is that you do not wipe off your shoes before walking inside the tent."
 - **Feeling:** the person who is giving the feedback then states how the action/complaint/problem makes them feel; ex: "It makes me feel angry because the tent floor gets dirty."
 - **Request:** the person who is giving the feedback then assertively requests their desire; ex: "Jesse, please use the rug to wipe off your shoes or take your shoes off before coming inside the tent." The person receiving the feedback responds with how they will address the concern; ex: "I hear your point Jesse, and I will make sure to wipe off my shoes before I come inside next time."
- 5) Before letting the pairs practice, have two adults model one of the scenarios.

Complaint/Feeling/Request

- 6) Give pairs at least ten minutes to practice. Have pairs pick a new scenario and switch who is giving and receiving feedback so they both get a chance to practice.
- 7) Debrief the experience with guided questions: How did it feel when you were giving feedback? How did it feel to receive feedback? Were you more comfortable in one role or the other? How could you become comfortable in both roles?

Take It Further

- Continue to use CFR as a conflict resolution tool for one-on-one feedback.
- Use this activity as a framework for a larger discussion on conflict resolution/management.
 - Ask each youth in the group if they have ever been in a conflict before. Have a few share their experiences or share examples of situations when a conflict could arise.
 - Is it OK to have conflicts? Can you respond however you want when you are in a conflict?
 - What are other ways to address and resolve conflicts?

Examples: CFR At-a-Glance

Complaint

The person who is giving the feedback simply states their complaint or problem to a specific person (or the group as a whole); ex: “Jesse, my complaint is that you do not wipe off your shoes before walking inside the tent.”

Feeling

The person who is giving the feedback states how the action/complaint/problem makes them feel; ex: “It makes me feel angry because the tent floor gets dirty.”

Request

The person who is giving the feedback then assertively requests their desire; ex: “Jesse, please use the rug to wipe off your shoes or take your shoes off before coming inside.”

The person receiving the feedback responds with how they will address the concern; ex: “I hear your point Jesse, and I will make sure to wipe off my shoes before I come inside next time.”

The Power of Empathy

Use this animated short of [Dr. Brené Brown](#) to explore the differences between empathy and sympathy. This activity allows youth to explore their **Ways of Relating** through practicing empathy with others.

Why This Matters

- Connecting with and supporting others is essential. That's why empathy—the ability to identify with other people's struggles and support them—is so important.
- Sympathy minimizes someone's pain, whereas empathy connects us to their pain. Empathy helps us discover what we have in common with each other.
- Empathy is a skill that develops by practicing giving and receiving empathy.

Getting Started

- Materials: video + audio for group
- Time: 20-30 minutes
- This activity works best with groups that are comfortable with each other.
- Count the number of youth ahead of time so that you know you can form groups of two or three.
- Preview the 3-minute video created by the Royal Society of the Arts, which is available on [Vimeo](#) or [YouTube](#) or [download the MP4](#) (<https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-shorts/2013/12/Brene-Brown-on-Empathy>).

How To Use It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to learn about and practice empathy, an important skill for supporting friends and family.
- 2) Have a discussion about the concept of empathy compared to sympathy. What comes to mind when you think of the word sympathy (feeling sorry, providing comfort or assurance)? What comes to mind when you think of the word empathy (feeling with people, putting yourself in their shoes)? If you share a struggle, worry or challenge, how do you want people to respond ("that sucks", "I've been there", "it could be worse". "why don't you...", "it sounds like...", "I'm sorry").
- 3) Watch the 3-minute video.
- 4) Discuss the four attributes of empathy that Brown references:
 - To be able to see the world as others see it. This requires putting your own "stuff" aside to see the situation through someone else's eyes.
 - To be nonjudgmental. Judgment of another person's situation discounts the experience and is an attempt to protect ourselves from the pain of the situation.
 - To understand another person's feelings. We have to be in touch with our own feelings in order to understand someone else's.
 - To communicate your understanding of that person's feelings. Rather than saying, "At least you..." or "It could be worse..." try, "I've been there, and that really hurts," or, "It sounds like you are in a hard place now. Tell me more about it."
- 5) Explain to youth that Brown defines empathy as a skill that develops by practicing giving and receiving empathy. It's a skill, and it takes practice. Have youth spend the next 10-15 minutes practicing empathy with the following activity.
- 6) Have youth get in groups of three (or pairs). Each person in the group will take turns having each role. Describe the three roles:
 - One person is the fox, someone willing to talk about a challenge they are having in their life. (Depending

The Power of Empathy

on the maturity of the group, consider giving youth scenarios. Potential scenarios might include: receiving a low grade on a test, the loss of a pet, conflict with friends, etc.)

- The other person is the bear who listens and resists the urge to offer advice or try to fix it. The bear might say phrases like: “It sounds like...” “Thank you for sharing with me.”
- The third person is the reindeer who offers silver linings: “At least...”.

7) Debrief the activity with some of these questions:

- Foxes, what did it feel like to have someone listen to you?
- Bears, was it challenging to not give advice? What were some of your responses to the fox?
- Reindeers, how did it feel to offer silver linings?
- For everyone: What is challenging about expressing empathy rather than sympathy? What do you see as the main differences between sympathy and empathy? What surprised you most about the activity? How will this activity affect your actions moving forward?

Take It Further

- Use this activity with adult staff to build their own empathy skills. Have a discussion about how to be empathetic with youth when providing feedback.
- To learn more about The Power of Empathy, you can watch [Brown's complete RSA lecture](#). You can also watch her very popular TED Talk on [The Power of Vulnerability](#).

Eight Arrows

Eight Arrows is an activity that allows participants to acknowledge what they can commit to bringing to the group, and identify the impact of their shared commitment. Eight Arrows falls primarily in the **Ways of Relating** category because youth discuss how they will work as a team and what they will accomplish. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

Why This Matters

- This activity helps groups understand their own strengths and establish expectations for each other. Setting positive behavior expectations in a program is a crucial step for creating an environment for SEL growth.
- This process helps groups identify the collective goal for their time together.

Getting Started

- **Materials:** You will need a board with the Eight Arrows on it, which looks like the template (with four inward arrows and four outward arrows). Each member of the group needs a piece of paper with the template and something to write with.
- **Time:** 30-60 minutes
- This activity is best for an adolescent group that is going to be doing a project together.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to talk about individual strengths and resources and how they affect group outcomes. Use the analogy of baking a cake to talk about the parts that make up a whole. (Ask: "What are the different ingredients we bring to make a cake? What is the outcome when all the ingredients come together? What happens if one ingredient is missing?"). Use this example to emphasize that in order to work together as a group, it is important that each individual commits to bringing their own strengths and resources.
- 2) Ask the group to spend a few minutes brainstorming individually. First, on their own sheet of paper, each participant should write a few things that they are willing to contribute to the group project at hand. Participants should think about the following questions to spark their brainstorming:
 - Think of a successful team you have been a part of in the past (e.g., sports team, a play). What helped you succeed? What did you contribute to the group?
 - Be sure to give some examples. Some ideas include: organization, honest feedback, creative ideas, support to others, positive attitude.
 - Those items should be identified in the inward arrows.
- 3) Ask the group to then identify things they believe will result from their contribution. Those items should be identified in the outward arrows. Some questions to consider:
 - What do you hope will be some of the outcomes of this group? (i.e. successful camping trip, service learning project, new friendships)
 - What are some of our group goals?
- 4) Spend five minutes having participants add ideas to their individual sheet of paper. After everyone has had enough time, bring the group together and have each person share what they wrote. As each person talks, write down their contributions on the poster board. By the end of this process the group will have a visual representation of the group's strengths and their desired outcomes.

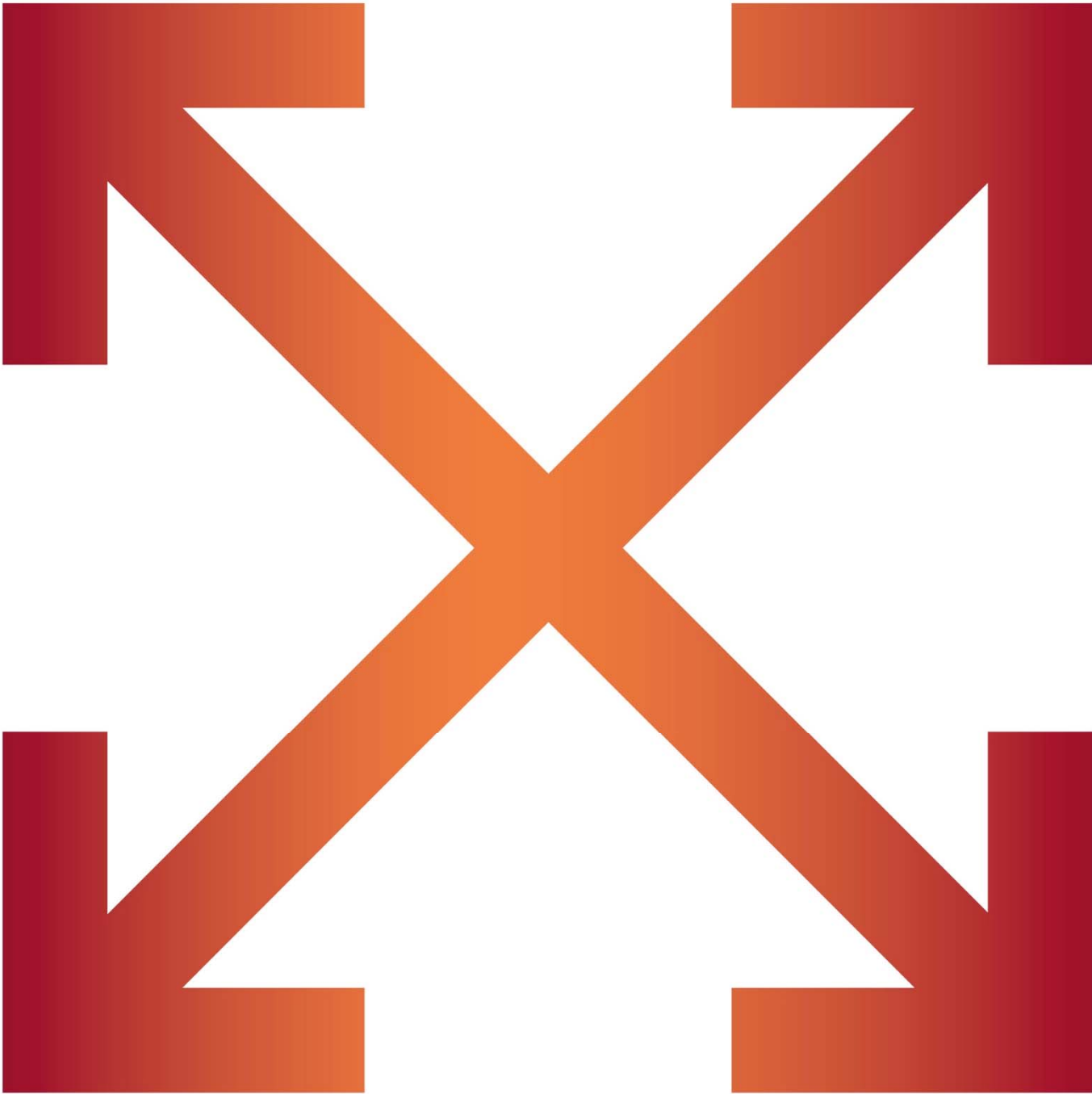
Eight Arrows

- 5) This can be used as a reflection activity throughout the project or it could be the start of a group contract, mission statement, or purpose.
- 6) Reflection Questions:
 - a. What did you learn about the resources in your group? How can you use this information to help accomplish your group goals?
 - b. Where do our group strengths lie? What other skills do we need to accomplish our goals?
 - c. What do we do if we notice someone is not offering what they committed to bring?

Take It Further

- Use this as a start to a group contract or mission statement.

Template: Eight Arrows



Goal Sandwich

Use this activity to help youth identify a short-term goal and create concrete steps to complete that goal. This short process is great for groups new to goal-setting. Goal sandwich allows youth to practice their **Ways of Doing** by learning the important skills of goal-setting. This activity was contributed by Project Success.

Why This Matters

- Goal-setting is a crucial social and emotional skill that helps youth plan for their future.
- This activity breaks down the process of goal setting into easy, actionable steps.

Getting Started

- Materials: Pens/pencils, 4 different colored notecards or paper. You need enough so that each youth has one of each color.
- Time: At least 30 minutes
- Explain the activity using a group example.

How To Use It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to have youth identify a goal and make steps to achieve that goal. Discuss the word, "goal," and ask youth to think about how it is used in different contexts (e.g., a goal in soccer). Potential questions: What comes to mind when you think of the word "goal"? What are some examples of goals that you have set in the past? Explain that goals are the smaller, practical steps one needs to achieve a dream.
- 2) Tell the group that today they will set goals in the form of a goal sandwich.

- 3) Distribute a packet of index cards to each student, saying that each color represents a different layer of the sandwich.
 - The [name color] card is bread. The bread frames the sandwich. It's the beginning and the end. Youth fold the yellow card hamburger-style and title the left panel "Present" and the right panel "Future." On the left, students write a current challenge (i.e. "I am failing biology."). On the right, they write their goal (i.e., "I want to raise my biology grade to a B.").
 - The [name color] card is jelly. Jelly gives the sandwich flavor. It is motivation to take a bite, but remind them that they can't eat it all in one big bite. Bites have to be manageable. Title this card "Steps to My Goal." Using checkboxes, instruct the students to list at least 3 steps they will have to complete to accomplish the goal.
 - The [name color] card is peanut butter. Peanut butter is tasty, but it is thick and slows eating a sandwich. Title this card "Obstacles." This is not to say that peanut butter or eating slowly are bad things, but the illustration demonstrates how goals may be slowed. Instruct students to list 2 or 3 obstacles that might prevent accomplishment of the goal.
 - The [name color] card is milk. Milk helps the sandwich-eating experience, allowing the sandwich to be ingested more easily. Title this card "People Who Can Help Me," those who can help with the "how and why" of goal-setting. On this card, instruct students to list 3 people who will support their completing of the goal.
- 4) Before having students work on their individual goals, explain that you will all work through an example as a group. Pick a concrete and silly example to work through the goal sandwich with the group. Ask youth to help brainstorm each part of the sandwich. Write down the components on a white board or large sheet of paper. Some potential goals to work through are: Organize an end of the year field trip to the zoo, get a summer job, volunteer at the local animal shelter, etc.
- 5) Tell youth that the next step is for them to work on an individual goal. Place some confines on the scope

Goal Sandwich

of the goal (i.e. a goal for the beginning of the school year, a goal for school, a goal for after-school time, a goal in their family). Give students at least 20 minutes to work on their goal sandwich. Walk around the room to answer questions and help those who might need ideas.

- 6) Wrap-Up: Ask students to turn to the person next to them and share their goals with each other. The listener should support the speaker by asking 4 questions:
 - Is the goal attainable?
 - Is the list of steps complete?
 - Will you accomplish the goal?
 - How will you celebrate the accomplishment of this goal?
- 7) Ask the students how it felt when their classmates evaluated their goal. Who might be able to help them set goals in the future?

Take It Further

- This activity could be used as a process for a group of youth to set goals for a specific project or a period of time.
- The Goal Sandwich could also be used in a one-on-one setting with an individual youth.
- To further reflect on the activity, consider asking the following questions:
 - How did it feel to share your goal with someone else?
 - What other goals would you like to set in the future?
 - What parts of the sandwich were the easiest to come up with? Which parts were the most challenging?

Consensus Building

Use this facilitated conversation template to help youth reach consensus regarding a program, project or initiative that they will implement. Use it at the start of a program cycle, or for an isolated event that can accommodate a high level of youth ownership and direction. The final decision and direction rests with the youth involved, but it can be confined by any parameters you set in advance (i.e. budget, time, geography, purpose, outcome, etc.). This activity allows youth to practice their Ways of Doing as they work together to move their project forward. This activity was contributed by Banyan Community.

Why This Matters

- This activity takes youth through the process of navigating relationships with others, their feelings, and an alternative process for getting things done.
- As youth identify their individual rationale, it also provides an opportunity for reflecting on “Ways I Am.”

Getting Started

- Time: This activity will take at least 30 minutes depending on the engagement of the group and how quickly you move the discussion along.
- Materials needed: poster paper and markers for each group of 4-6 youth. Sitting in a circle at tables or on the floor is highly preferred.

- This activity can be used for middle and high school youth. The depth of conversation and time it takes to reach consensus will vary based on the age and maturity of youth.
- This activity is most effective with established groups that have a high level of trust.
- This activity follows a brainstorming session where the group identifies a number of options for an activity, service project or program that they will implement.

How To Use It

- 1) Begin by explaining that youth will be working together to decide the direction of their project. Say something like: “Today you will have a chance to decide what we’re going to do for (e.g., our service project). We are going to have a consensus building conversation. Can anyone define consensus? (General agreement; it doesn’t mean that every individual has to feel the same way, but the overwhelming majority has to agree). We’re going to break into small groups. Be sure to allow each person in the group the opportunity to share their opinion.”
- 2) Divide your group into teams of about 4-6 youth.
 - Create groups that include diverse perspectives and skills. The more representative, inclusive and diverse the groups are, the easier it will be to reach consensus later. If groups are organized by friend groups, gender, culture, or obvious interests, youth might NOT encounter alternative opinions until late in the process.
- 3) Each group will need to choose someone as their scribe and someone as their spokesperson. The scribe will be responsible for writing down their conversation. The spokesperson will be responsible for speaking on behalf of the group to the larger group.

Consensus Building

- 4) Ask groups to review the projects recorded in the brainstorming activity, and rank their top three based on what they are most interested in doing.
 - Have youth write the reason for their interest in a given project next to their ranking (e.g., I've always wanted to do that. It would help the most people. It would be fun!).

- 5) Once all groups have had a chance to record their rankings, ask each spokesperson to present their rankings to the class, along with their rationale.

- 6) After each spokesperson has presented their rankings, ask youth to identify any trends.

Discussion questions:

- Did any of you choose the same or similar activity for your top three?
- Did any of you have similar reasons for wanting to do a particular project?
- Based on what others have shared, do any of you feel like changing your rankings?
- Are there ideas that other groups shared that you disagree with, have no interest in doing, or don't understand? (If there are, would anyone from that group like to clarify what you were thinking?)
- Are there any projects that don't seem to have much interest? Cross those out.
- What project seems to have the most interest? (You can offer suggestions based on your observation of the conversation, but try very hard not to usurp their decision.)
 - If the group is able to identify one, ask "Is anyone strongly opposed to this?"
 - If there is no strong opposition, you have arrived at consensus!
 - If there is strong opposition, or there are a couple projects that stand out, you could break back into small groups to rank projects again based on their conversation and a narrower list of options. Then move through some of the discussion questions above until they have identified one project.

- If there is one youth who opposes, make sure they have the opportunity to share their opinion and be sure to ask specific questions to understand their opposition (e.g., How would you change or improve the project?). If further discussion does not convince them, try going back to the original definition of consensus and remind the group that not everyone will agree and that is ok. To ensure the involvement of this youth going forward, consider giving them a leadership role in the project.

Take It Further

Assign some youth as observers in each group. Their role is to watch and record how their group worked together to reach its rankings, and how the larger group worked together to reach consensus. At the end, invite them to share their observations.

- Discussion questions: Did everyone in your group have the opportunity to share their opinions? Were anyone left out? Were there ideas that were received differently in your small group versus the large group? Do you want to give a shout out to anyone in the group? Did you see something in any of your peers that you hadn't seen before (e.g., their voice, strong opinion, leadership)?